

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TUNIS 07788 041608Z

43

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 041545Z NOV 76
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4801
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME

S E C R E T TUNIS 7788

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT TS
SUBJECT: STATE OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH

1. WE WOULD NOT WANT OUR SILENCE ON STATE OF BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH TO BE INTERPRETED AS MEANING ALL GOES WELL WITH TUNISIA'S PRESIDENT. HOWEVER, AS DEPARTMENT WELL AWARE, EVERY TIME BOURGUIBA HAS HAD A BAD COLD IN LAST DECADE, TUNIS HAS STIRRED WITH RUMORS OF HIS IMMINENT DEMISE. WE HAVE LITTLE INFORMATION ON EXACTLY HOW SERIOUS IS BOURGUIBA'S PRESENT CONDITION, BUT HIS EXTENDED STAY IN GENEVA FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT AND REAST WOULD INDICATE FURTHER DECLINE IN HIS ALREADY POOR HEALTH. AS USUAL GOT

TTYTCTP CAUTIOUS IN DISCUSSING PRESIDENT'S CONDITION, AND WE HAVE ONLY FOLLOWING TO GO ON;

A. PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA STATED DURING PRIVATE MEETING WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE CLEMENTS RECENTLY THAT BOURGUIBA HAD BEEN SUFFERING FROM INSOMNIA, WHICH BEOAN TO HAVE EFFECTS ON HIS OVERALL HEALTH. AS A RESULT, HE WAS FLOWN TO GENEVA FOR TREATMENT BY SPECIALIST. HE NOW

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TUNIS 07788 041608Z

SLEEPING WELL, AND HIS CONDITION RETURNING TO NORMAL.

B. ON OTHER HAND, WELL PLACED GOT OFFICIAL TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER AT ABOUT SAME TIME THAT PRESIDENT WOULD PROBABLY REMAIN IN GENEVA FOR "SEVERAL MONTHS".

2. ABOVE ADDS UP TO VERY LITTLE. THERE ARE RUMORS APLENTY AS USUAL, INCLUDING STORY THAT BOURGUIBA'S ENTIRE LEFT SIDE IS PARALYZED; AND IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT UNLIKE PAST REST CURES IN SWITZERLAND, THERE HAVE BEEN NO PICTURES OF BOURGUIBA TAKING A WALK OR RECEIVING VISITORS.

3. ALSO NOTEWORTHY ARE EXPRESSIONS OF WISHES FOR EARLY RECOVERY OF PRESIDENT
FROM VARIOUS FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS
WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN LOCAL PRESS. WE HAVE EXPRESSED OUT CONCERN DURING JOINT COMMISSION MEETING AND WE DO NOT THINK ANY FURTHER EXPRESSION OF USG CONCERN AT THIS TIME WOULD BE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL. WE WILL, OF COURSE ADVISE IF SITUATION CHANGES.

4. FOR GENEVA: WE WOULD, NATURALLY, BE INTERESTED IN ANY INFORMATIONON STATE OF BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH THAT MIGHT COME TO ATTENTION OF US MISSION.
KING

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